

# Department of Justice

## High-Risk Metropolitan Area Interoperability Assistance Project

### Hampton Roads/Norfolk, Virginia



#### Addressing Interoperability

The Department of Justice (DOJ) Wireless Management Office (WMO) is working to improve long-term interagency communications across the Nation. As an interim step, and as a response to a request from the House/Senate CJS Appropriations Subcommittee staff, the DOJ WMO has been leading the High-Risk Metropolitan Area Interoperability Assistance Project (“25 Cities”) to provide targeted cities with basic and immediate interagency communications capabilities among local, state, and federal agencies during emergency response. As stakeholders in 1 of the 25 cities, Hampton Roads/Norfolk metropolitan area, local, state, and federal public safety agencies have been working collaboratively with the DOJ WMO to address basic interoperable communications.

#### Participating Agencies

Partnership among Hampton Roads/Norfolk area local, state, and federal public safety agencies has been instrumental in the development of comprehensive interoperability solution sets. DOJ WMO also coordinated with local and state agencies throughout the project and determined that project funding would focus on improving federal, state, and local interoperability by integrating into the local and state solutions funded by recent federal grants. Participating agencies have included—

- Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives
- City of Chesapeake
- City of Hampton
- City of Newport News
- City of Norfolk
- City of Portsmouth
- City of Suffolk
- City of Virginia Beach
- Drug Enforcement Administration
- Federal Bureau of Investigation
- Federal Emergency Management Agency
- National Aeronautics and Space Administration
- U.S. Air Force
- U.S. Army
- U.S. Coast Guard (USCG)
- U.S. Customs and Border Protection
- U.S. Immigration & Customs Enforcement
- U.S. Marshals Service
- U.S. Navy
- U.S. Postal Inspection Service (USPIS)
- U.S. Secret Service
- Virginia Department of Emergency Management
- Virginia State Police
- York/James City/Williamsburg

#### Key Successes

DOJ and area stakeholders successfully achieved basic interoperability and emergency response communications improvements in the Hampton Roads/Norfolk metropolitan area through the implementation of one primary interoperability solution. Additionally, in the course of meeting this project’s interoperability goals, federal stakeholders were able to foster working relationships to resolve interoperability objectives for the area.

An interoperability channel was implemented to support interagency communications during an emergency response. DOJ installed a 350-watt conventional digital narrowband repeater with 10 voted receivers strategically located to provide on-street portable coverage throughout the immediate Hampton Roads/Norfolk metropolitan area. Hosted and maintained by the

FBI, the new very high frequency (VHF) interoperability channel enables federal agencies currently operating with VHF digital narrowband capable subscriber radios to communicate. While primarily reserved for communications among command and control personnel during emergency responses, the channel’s use is encouraged for routine operations that involve interagency communications.

To extend connectivity to the federal interoperability channel, radio control stations were installed to link disparate, out-of-band radio systems to the federal interoperability channel. To enable dispatchers to perform console patches of agencies’ talk groups or channels to the federal interoperability channel, control stations were provided to USPIS, USCG and local U.S. Air Force, U.S. Army, and U.S. Navy bases.

DOJ also purchased 50 radio base station consolettes that will be installed in 8 ACU-1000’s audio switches located in Chesapeake, Hampton, Newport News, Norfolk, Portsmouth, Suffolk, Virginia Beach, and York/James City/Williamsburg communications centers. These centers will be networked together via the Port Security OC3 microwave system.

To address management issues related to the new interoperability equipment, DOJ worked with several stakeholders to develop standard operating procedures (SOP) to outline the use of communications equipment and to ensure proper operation of interoperability resources. Assistance included developing SOPs and an interoperability resource guide. The interoperability resource guide, a tri-fold document containing pertinent channel information, was developed as a quick reference for users operating on the federal interoperability channel.

#### Moving Forward

The cooperation and support between participating agencies and DOJ WMO provided scalable solutions designed to give local, state, and federal agencies access to the interoperability solutions. These efforts, along with stakeholder support, will ensure continuity in addressing interoperable communications among public safety agencies in the Hampton Roads/Norfolk metropolitan area.

#### Contact Information

If you would like to know more about this initiative and the interoperability solutions, please contact—

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